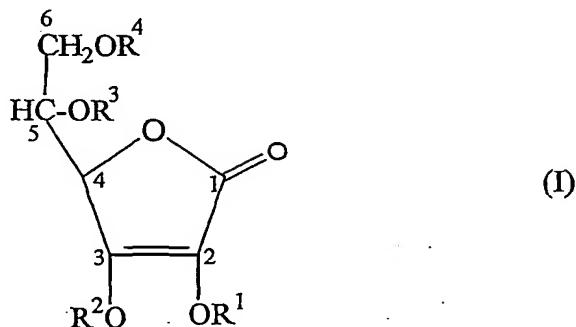


CLAIMS:

1. A compound of the general formula I:



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wherein R¹ is a C₂-C₂₂ acyl group, an amino acid group, or a C₁-C₁₇ alkyl group; R² is ammonium or a metal cation; and each of R³ or R⁴, independently, is hydrogen, a C₂-C₂₂ acyl group, an amino acid residue, or a C₁-C₁₇ alkyl group.

10 2. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R² is ammonium or a monovalent metal cation selected from Na⁺, K⁺, or Li⁺.

15 3. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R² is a divalent alkaline earth metal cation selected from Mg⁺⁺, Ca⁺⁺, or Ba⁺⁺ or a trivalent metal cation selected from Al⁺⁺⁺ or Fe⁺⁺⁺.

20 4. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R² is selected from Na⁺, K⁺, Mg⁺⁺, or Ca⁺⁺.

5. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R¹ is a C₂-C₂₂ carboxylic acyl group derived from a straight or branched, saturated or unsaturated carboxylic acid selected from acetic, propionic, n-butyric, isobutyric, sorbic, n-valeric, isovaleric, caproic, caprylic, capric, undecanoic, lauric, tridecanoic, myristic, pentadecanoic, or arachidonic acid.

6. A compound according to claim 5 wherein R¹ is a C₈-C₁₈ acyl group.
7. A compound according to claim 6 wherein R¹ is capryloyl or palmitoyl.
- 5 8. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R¹ is the residue of a natural α -amino acid such as glycine, alanine, serine, leucine, isoleucine, phenylalanine, tyrosine or glutamic acid.
- 10 9. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R¹ is the residue of glycine.
10. A compound according to claim 1 wherein R³ and R⁴ are hydrogen, R² is ammonium or a metal cation, and R¹ is a C₈-C₁₈ acyl derived from a fatty acid.
- 15 11. A compound according to claim 10 wherein R² is a monovalent metal cation selected from Na⁺, K⁺, or Li⁺ or a divalent metal cation selected from Mg⁺⁺ or Ca⁺⁺.
12. The compound according to claim 1 wherein R³ and R⁴ are hydrogen, R² is Na⁺ and R¹ is capryloyl.
- 20 13. The compound according to claim 1 wherein R³ and R⁴ are hydrogen, R² is Na⁺ and R¹ is palmitoyl.
14. A composition comprising as an active ingredient a compound according to any 25 one of claims 1 to 13.
15. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of conditions, diseases or disorders associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.

16. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of cancer.
17. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 16 further comprising lipoic acid or a chemotherapeutic agent.
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18. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 15 for enhancement of the immune system.
19. A nutraceutical composition according to claim 14, optionally comprising other
10 nutraceutics.
20. A pharmaceutical or nutraceutical composition according to claim 14 adapted for oral administration, optionally in the form of micro/nanocapsules confining an effective amount of the compound of formula (I).
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21. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for topical use.
22. A cosmetic composition according to claim 14 together with cosmetic applicable carriers, excipients or diluents.
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23. A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for topical application for skin care.
24. A cosmetic composition according to claim 23 for reducing fine lines, wrinkles
25 or skin roughness, skin whitening or stimulation of collagen synthesis.
25. A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for use as anti-aging agent.
26. A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for treatment of photodamaged
30 skin.

27. A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 in the form of a lotion, cream, gel, or in liquid form.
- 5 28. The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for use as moisturizing cream, anti-ageing cream, anti-wrinkle cream, sunscreen cream, skin whitening and for stimulating collagen synthesis.
- 10 29. The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 further comprising one or more active ingredients such as vitamin E, vitamin P, retinol, retinol esters, hyaluronic acid, and/or algal extracts.
- 15 30. A dermatological composition according to claim 14 for treating or controlling skin states or conditions associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.
- 20 31. A method of skin care, particularly for reducing fine lines, wrinkles and skin roughness, or for stimulation of collagen synthesis in a mammal in need thereof, which comprises topically administering a composition comprising a compound of general formula (I) of claim 1 to said mammal in need.